



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

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Testimony in Support of Home and Community Based Services for Elders and Persons with Disabilities

Sen. Prague, Rep. Serra, Rep. Cook, Senator Kelly, Rep. Frey and distinguished members of the Aging Committee,

My name is Susan Raimondo and I am the Senior Director of Advocacy and Programs for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Connecticut Chapter. The National MS Society has offices in Hartford and Norwalk. We serve over 6,000 individuals living with multiple sclerosis and their families in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We are here today in support of home and community based services for elders and persons with disabilities. A few of the bills on today's agenda address this important topic.

Earlier this week Governor Malloy announced the expansion of the 'Money Follows the Person' (MFP) program. This program combines cost-effectiveness with improved quality of life for individuals who can live on their own with support services.

We applaud this effort. However, we want to express our concern that the existing home and community based service programs for individuals with disabilities have massive waiting lists and it can take over a year to obtain services. The reality is that many individuals may end up entering a nursing home while waiting to obtain access to these programs.

The National MS Society and over 20 groups have come together and are advocating for the state of Connecticut to pursue a 1915(i) Medicaid state plan amendment. This would help Connecticut streamline and improve access to Medicaid home and community-based long-term care services (HCBS) by directing the Department of Social Services (DSS) to seek, pursuant to Section 1915(i) of the Social Security Act, authorization from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid of an amendment of the Connecticut Medicaid state plan.

The Affordable Care Act provides new opportunities for states to restructure their home and community-based services. One of these is a modified 1915(i) Medicaid State Plan Amendment.

The new option will:

- **Overcome "silos"** by addressing the historical fragmentation of the Medicaid "waivers," which are associated with specific age and diagnostic eligibility criteria;
- **Expand coverage** to eligible waitlisted individuals;
- **Allow for presumptive eligibility;** and

- **Maximize federal funds**, as DSS may be able to move additional participants from exclusively state-funded supports to Medicaid, which will qualify these services for a federal match of at least 50%. These programs include certain participants of the CHCPE and individuals served by DMHAS through state grants.

This should be prioritized because of the opportunity to expand coverage to individuals who are currently waitlisted for HCBS and to garner federal match for some of the individuals who are currently served exclusively through state funding.

My professional and personal experiences include serving on the Money Follows the Person Steering Committee and being appointed as the Family Caregiver Representative on the CT Long Term Care Advisory Council. My husband has advanced MS and I have been working at the National MS Society for 24 years.

The Medicaid 1915 i state plan amendment is one of the most positive opportunities I have seen to promote independence, while offering ways to save money and increase revenue.

Although we support options for expanding the eligibility of the existing CT Home Care Program for Elders, given the enormous budget crisis we feel that this should be explored at a time when things are better fiscally.

Please support the Medicaid 1915 i state plan amendment and opportunities for providing home and community based services for individuals who need long-term care.

Soon there will be legislation introduced that will offer specific details about the Medicaid 1915i state plan amendment.

Please support the Medicaid 1915 i state plan amendment and opportunities for providing home and community based services for individuals who need long-term care.

Thank you.

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